

MEETING SUMMARY

COMMITTEE: Citizens Council

DATE: Friday, September 15, 2006

TIME BEGAN: 8:15am **TIME ENDED:** 10:00am **FACILITATED BY:** Sue Smith **SUMMARY BY:** Judy Buswell

PRESENT: Jim Pilliod, Dick Wallace, Micheline Roy, Christie Corrigan, Ruth Castonguay, Sue Smith, Emily Clement, Nancy Porosky, Rasim Gusinac, Richard Moed **GUESTS:** Trisha Burton (Youth Services Bureau), Paul Tierney (Selectmen, New Hampton), Barbara Lucas (Town Administrator, New Hampton), Chief Chip Sawyer (Police Chief, New Hampton), Brian Loanes (Belknap County Juvenile Restorative Justice Program **STAFF:** Alan Robichaud, Judy Buswell

1. **Welcoming and Introductions** Appreciation extended to Christie Corrigan for hosting this September meeting of the Council in her historic farmhouse on Straits Road in New Hampton. Sue welcomed New Hampton visitors and other guests. Those attending were asked to introduce themselves with a few explanatory sentences along with their names. During introductions, several Council members also shared information about upcoming events:
 - ***“Turbulent Teens: Parents Helping Parents”*** (Nancy Porosky), a support group for parents who are concerned about risky choices their teens are making, begins on Thursday, September 28th at 7:30pm at the Gilmanton Community Church.
 - ***Recovery Month New Horizons Auction*** (Ruth Castonguay) is scheduled for September 23rd at the Laconia Congregational Church in Veteran’s Square
 - ***Grandparent Dinner Event*** (Dick Wallace) is scheduled soon through the resources of Community Youth Activities in Alton. Dick also announced that the new “Prime For Life” curriculum for entering freshmen at Prospect Mountain High School has already generated referrals to the Adolescent Treatment Initiative for further screening and assessment.

2. **Council Overview**
 - ***Council Mission*** As this meeting in New Hampton is designed to foster dialogue around perceived challenges facing New Hampton families, Sue introduced the mission of the Citizens Council including an explanation of the three principles of Community Justice, the philosophy guiding the work of the Citizens Council.

Alan continued with a more in-depth outline of Council activities including a brief historical overview of the origins of the Council. The Belknap County Citizens Council is a unique County department, certainly the only one of its type in New Hampshire and probably beyond. The Council is not a service provider and has no authority over others, but is engaged in elevating the status of children and families in Belknap County through facilitating numerous networks, identifying and increasing resources, advocating on behalf of children and families, and introducing the voice of youth into the discussion.

Challenges include working productively within numerous jurisdictions while keeping a laser-like focus on the largest possible dimension affecting families in Belknap County. Currently the Council is involved in a data collection and analysis initiative, hopefully soon to be supported through additional grant resources.

Alan shared a grid he created that clarifies many of the Council’s activities and related partners.

- ***Implementing the Council’s Mission*** Alan shared the newly developed one-page handout that provides specific examples on how Council members might be involved in Council activities
- ***Director’s Report*** In interests of time and in lieu of his regular Director’s report, Alan distributed an information sheet with updates on Council activities. He called attention to organizational changes brought about by the resignation of CoRe Director, Renee Rockwell. Concerns are that this coalition maintains its grant-funded outreach to all of Belknap County. Alan noted that The Friends Program

that administers the Belknap County Mentoring Initiative is also undergoing some leadership changes. As both CoRe and the Friends Program are key Council partners, Alan will remain actively involved while these situations are resolved.

3. **Discussion with Guests on Balanced and Restorative Justice** Host Christie Corrigan, also Council Vice Chair, introduced a discussion with Council guests on how best to share Council resources with New Hampton residents. As part of this introduction Trisha Burton (Youth Services Bureau, Director and Member of the Newfound Regional District School Board) and Brian Loanes (Director of the Restorative Justice Program) explained how balanced and restorative justice principles are integrated within their programs. Youth Services Bureau is designed for first time offenders and Restorative Justice, for youth who are “more involved” in the court system. Both programs expect that the juvenile will take responsibility for their actions and make amends to the victims.

Council Chair, Sue Smith asked guests for their perspective on how the Council can help them. A variety of comments resulted:

- New Hampton is a large rural area with no identified “center of town”. There are really three “villages” in New Hampton (Main Street; Lower New Hampton that identifies closely with Bristol; and Upper New Hampton that identifies closely with Ashland and Meredith.
- Transportation to programs and activities, often held in Laconia, is problematic. Transportation even around New Hampton is difficult.
- Youth appear to be “getting into trouble” in communities outside New Hampton.
- New Hampton has an amount of neighborhood tensions. Perhaps New Hampton might benefit from some sort of “neighbor to neighbor” or “family to family” mediation program.
- New Hampton runs the gamut of socio-economic demographics (“from tar paper shacks to castles”).
- There is not a great deal of “community” spirit in New Hampton that manifests itself in well attended public meetings.
- The New Hampton Prep School, while it has moved ahead in engaging in the community of New Hampton, many still perceive this private school as “an island”
- The recent move of the Post Office out of the Main Street area created additional feelings of a splintered community.
- How can some efforts at targeting family issues be better included in the school curriculum? How can schools assist in resolving conflict? Note was made of Gilford School District’s initiative around institutionalizing “Values Education” into the scope of their curriculum.
- How can we get parents interested in kids again? Obviously there is no one magic bullet or solution.
- The Newfound School District has had a number of leadership changes over recent years, each of whom has had their personal favorite learning approach, making it difficult to “institutionalize” any one approach. Newfound School District is cautious and careful of their history and community and doesn’t like outsiders coming in with new ideas
- There has been an erosion of social responsibility. More community discussions on this topic are needed. Schools are not the only entity where this discussion should occur.
- Newfound School District includes seven towns and three counties. At one point there were three different phone exchanges within New Hampton.
- The story was shared about New Hampton municipal leaders who wishing to create a “common space” in New Hampton, purchased land for this purpose. The intent of the leaders was over-ruled and hostility and division resulted as many residents feared these “grandiose” ideas would change their own concept of what a rural town such as New Hampton should be.
- Council members observed that similar “insular” thinking exists elsewhere in other small communities in Belknap County.
- Chief Sawyer observed that the interests of most Police Departments revolve around the Chief. How to use additional resources now available through Homeland Security funds is one example. As one response to this concern, it was suggested that new ideas be shared within the Belknap County Police Chiefs Association on a regular basis.

Sponsoring some type of community meeting in New Hampton was discussed. Barbara Lucas liked this idea, but suggests that a first step is to meet with the Newfound Superintendent of Schools, town officials, and a handful of stakeholders who live in New Hampton. Sue Smith asked the three New Hampton guests present if they would be willing to assist and invite at least 5 other New Hampton residents to this meeting. Barbara Lucas agreed to share any information through the New Hampton Connections, an email list of over 400 contacts.

ACTION: Christie Corrigan agreed to work with the Citizens Council to organize some type of initial meeting with town, school, and community stakeholders.

4. **Other Business** Emily Clement made a motion to accept the minutes of the July 21, 2006 meeting of the Citizens Council; second provided by Nancy Porosky. Motion carried.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

WHEN: Friday, October 20, 2006 (8-10am)

**WHERE: River Level Conference Room, Busiel Mill in
Downtown Laconia**